

## ***Sidalcea nelsoniana*** Piper

Nelson's checker-mallow  
Malvaceae (Mallow Family)

**Status:** State Endangered, USFWS Threatened

**Rank:** G2S1

**General Description:** Perennial herb with a stout taproot and short woodstock, stems 16 to 40 inches tall, glabrous to hirsute with short appressed simple hairs; racemes spikelike but elongate and open, many-flowered, the pedicels usually about 1/8 inch long; calyx 1/8 to 1/4 inch long, usually purplish-tinged, subglabrous to fairly thickly pubescent with tiny stellae; petals 1/4 to 5/8 inch long, pinkish-lavender.

**Identification Tips:** *S. hendersonii* and *S. hirtipes* both occur within the range of *S. nelsoniana*. The calyx of *S. nelsoniana* is shorter and much less pubescent, the petals are shorter and the stem is much less hirsute than those of *S. hirtipes* (see general description for dimensions of calyx and petals of *S. nelsoniana*). *S. hendersonii* occurs only on tideflats; *S. nelsoniana* and *S. hirtipes* do not.

**Phenology:** Flowering can occur as early as mid-May and extend into September, depending on weather and site conditions. Fruits have been observed as early as mid-June and as late as mid-October.

**Range:** Regional endemic; southern Benton County, Oregon, north to Lewis County, Washington, and from central Linn County, Oregon, west to just west of the crest of the Coast Range. In WA it occurs in the Olympic Peninsula and Southwest Washington physiographic province.

**Habitat:** The range of the species is all within the Western Hemlock Zone of Franklin and Dyrness 1973. It occurs along streams and in meadows and other relatively open areas, such as roadsides. It is generally found in areas where prairie or grassland remnants persist, such as along fencerows, drainage swales, and at the edges of plowed fields adjacent to wooded areas. Standing water is present at some sites. Associated species of the known populations include mainly weedy species such as tall fescue (*Festuca arundinacea*), common velvet grass (*Holcus lanatus*), common rush (*Juncus effusus*), oxeye daisy (*Chrysanthemum leucanthemum*), sweet vernal grass

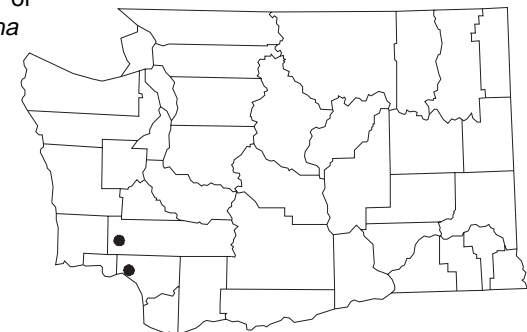
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Known distribution of  
*Sidalcea nelsoniana*  
in Washington



● Current (1980+)  
○ Historic (older than 1980)

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**Habitat** (continued): (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), and Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*).

**Ecology:** Fire suppression has led to an increase in competing woody species. In the past, occasional fires created openings facilitating the growth of the plant. The plants occur in a variety of habitats that undergo periodic flooding or soil saturation for extended periods of time. The woody rhizomatous stem of *S. nelsoniana* enables the plant to persist in some disturbed situations such as roadside ditches and mowed hayfields. The plant can also reproduce vegetatively by rhizomes.

**State Status Comments:** Only two populations exist in Washington, one each in Lewis and Cowlitz counties.

**Inventory Needs:** The species has not been the target of any systematic inventory efforts in WA. Given the species' status, such efforts are needed.

**Threats and Management Concerns:** Mowing, plowing, stream channel alteration, recreational activities, fire suppression, and roadside spraying have all occurred within the habitat of this species. The species has shown some resiliency to these disturbances, but given the species' rarity, they should be minimized.

**References:**

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